

Promises Made..... Promises Kept

When I came to Olympia, I promised you I would work to make our district, and our state, a better place to live. I'm happy to say that I have kept that promise.

- ✓ Dedicate lottery money to schools
- ✓ Patients' Bill of Rights
- ✓ Retraining benefits for displaced workers
- ✓ Guaranteed tax relief for all vehicle-owners
- ✓ Property tax relief for seniors and disabled citizens
- ✓ Teacher testing and professional accountability



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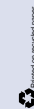
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**Representative
Aaron Reardon**

2000 Session Wrap Up

An Open Letter to the Citizens of the 38th District
May 2000

Dear Neighbors,

My first term as your representative in Olympia was a historic one. As you know, for only the second time in our state's history, the House of Representatives was tied – 49 Democrats and 49 Republicans.

We addressed difficult issues in a bi-partisan fashion. The first legislative session of the 21st Century will be remembered for the landmark legislation we passed.

My prime directive is to move our state forward through investing in education, improving transportation, and protecting our quality of life.

We passed landmark legislation in the areas of health care, worker retraining, teacher accountability, and children's safety.

We took the first steps in protecting personal, financial, and medical information from those who use it without permission.

Moreover, and perhaps most importantly, the House of Representatives passed a measure that finally puts all state lottery revenues towards our public schools – the place most of us always thought that money should go.

This newsletter describes in more detail these and some of the other major issues we tackled this session. If you have questions or comments about the 2000 legislative session, or anything else, please don't hesitate to give my office a call.

Thanks again for the honor of serving you.

Sincerely,

Representative Aaron Reardon

Patients’ Bill of Rights

Health care decisions should be made by you and your doctor, not by an HMO bureaucrat working for some out-of-state insurance company. Patients are right to demand basic protections when it comes to the quality of health care they receive. This session, I supported a Patients’ Bill of Rights that gives consumers these rights:

- **The Right to Choose your Doctor** – Choosing your family doctor, and seeing a specialist you trust when needed.
- **The Right to Privacy** – Protecting you from invasions of privacy, such as insurance companies sharing or selling your medical records for business purposes.
- **The Right to Know** – Making the process more open and honest by giving you information about your health plans, and by making clear the plan's grievance process before you buy health coverage.
- **The Right to Appeal** – Giving you the ability to appeal to an independent board when you are denied health care.
- **The Right to Justice** – Making insurance companies responsible, and liable, if they cause injury or death by wrongly denying health coverage.

This Patients’ Bill of Rights has been signed by Governor Locke and is now the law. For more information, you may call the Washington State Insurance Commissioner at **800-562-6900** and online at **www.insurance.wa.gov/**.

Tax relief

MVET: The People Have Spoken

Both the House and Senate voted to permanently remove the Motor Vehicle Excise Tax from cars, trucks, vans, and motor homes – ensuring that the \$30 tags are here to stay!

Assistance targeted toward seniors and disabled citizens

Another very important provision we adopted this legislative session will reduce the property tax burden on thousands of senior citizens and disabled citizens. This targeted tax relief will make a difference for thousands of people.

- **Seniors and disabled retirees** (HB 3166): The Legislature expanded the existing homeowner property tax break up to \$500 for senior citizens and disable retired persons who already qualify for a homeowner tax relief program and earn less than \$30,000 annually.
- **Senior homeowners** (HB 3167): All seniors 65 and older now qualify for a homeowner property tax break of \$200 a year. Seniors who have worked hard all their lives and pay their property taxes deserve a break.

All in all, I sponsored over **\$800 million dollars in targeted tax relief** for citizens, veterans, homeowners, and small business. Unfortunately, not all of this legislation passed into law. However, I will work on these issues over the interim for successful passage in 2001.

You can obtain more information about the tax-deferral program for senior citizens and disabled citizens by contacting the state Department of Revenue at (360) 753-1942. Or, you can write the state office at:

Department of Revenue
Property Tax Division
PO Box 47471
Olympia, WA 98504-7471

You can also contact the Snohomish County assessor’s office at 388-3366 for information about the tax-deferral program.

Education

Better Schools Fund

Since I’ve been in Olympia, a good many of you have called or written me about the state lottery system. People, including myself, believe the lottery proceeds should be dedicated to our schools.

Well, they finally are!

Starting July 1, 2000, all General Fund lottery revenue will go into what we call a “Better Schools Fund.” These dollars will be distributed, on a per-student basis, to every school district in the state. Our local school board will decide how best to use the fund for non-basic education and local program enhancement. The amount of money should be about \$58 million for the remainder of this biennium, and, \$116 million a year thereafter.

Teacher Quality

Without a high-quality teacher in every classroom, even the most ambitious plans will falter. The supplemental budget includes funding for a professional standards board to ensure that new teachers have a clear understanding of basic skills.

Teaching is a demanding profession and, like other professionals, teachers must continue their education throughout their professional career. The supplemental budget includes funding to pay for three additional teacher training days each year.

We also support teaching as a profession by creating a professional standards board and encouraging professional development.

School safety grants

With the continued incidents of school violence, parents, students, and teachers are all concerned with making our schools safe havens of learning.

Last session, the Washington State Legislature appropriated \$3 million dollars in grants for school districts to use in developing safety programs. When that money was all spent, there were still requests from eligible schools amounting to \$5,205,000.

I sponsored legislation that would fully fund all those grant applications. This measure had wide-bipartisan support. While the bill didn’t make it to the House floor, the \$5.2 million was included in the budget, so all qualified schools will now receive money to develop a safety plan or hire security personnel.

School Construction

The state once paid two-thirds of the cost of building new schools, but state support has declined sharply in the past 12 years. Local school districts now pay over two-thirds of the cost, leaving local property tax increases as the only option for making up the difference.

This session, we took a huge step toward making the state a more equal partner in school construction. We provided \$150 million to build and improve facilities at the state’s public schools, colleges and universities this year, and established a method of transferring money from the state reserve fund to the common school construction fund at a faster pace.

Helping dislocated workers retrain for the 21st Century Economy

In February, Gov. Gary Locked signed the Working Retraining and Tax Fairness Act (HB 3077), the first bill enacted into law this session. I am proud to be the prime sponsor of the original draft of this landmark legislation. This is one of the most important tax and jobs-training measures ever passed in Washington. One that works for our area and the whole state. The goal is to get people whose jobs have disappeared into a system of ongoing training so they may acquire the skills to get new family-wage jobs in industries that are growing.

This bill works for employees and employers. Business-tax savings for 90 percent of the state’s businesses are also emphasized in this legislation. The unemployment-insurance tax had been set to soar — for all businesses in the state — by \$200 million in the next year alone. Washington’s business taxpayers were looking at tax hikes amounting to \$576 million over the next six years. We stopped that.

For information about programs for Boeing workers, call 888-844-2817. For all other questions, call your local WorkSource or job training center. Also check these web pages: www.wa.gov/esd/ui/qatb.htm and www.wa.gov/esd/.



Unfinished Business: Your Privacy

Next item up for bid: YOU

Businesses are getting rich by selling **your** personal information – often without your permission. The kind of information being traded goes beyond a simple, anonymous listing in the phone book. Companies are buying and selling your personal profile. Associated with your name is your phone number, social security number, address, account numbers and history, buying habits, and medical history.

In closed-door negotiations, some businesses contend that the information is not your property, but theirs – to buy, sell, and trade as they please. In some cases, a company will guarantee a profit from your information by selling it to others at a premium cost, or charging you a fee to keep it private.

From sweeping reforms to targeted remedies, we have worked hard to enact legislation that puts you back in control of your personal information. We started a substantive debate this year, and we have the opportunity to prevent further abuse of consumer information before it spins further out of control.

This is an issue that is bound to become more important as technology becomes increasingly advanced. We will continue to work on protections for your personal privacy next year.